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# Isaiah 44:5: Textual Criticism and Other Arguments

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The small unit of Isa 44:1-5 contains several problems with regard to textual criticism, syntax, exegesis and theology. Verse 5 forms not only the climax of the unit, but also of all these problems. Exegetes differ on this verse in at least three respects: (1) does this verse refer to Israelite people, coming back to their God, or to converted gentiles? (2) must we translate the verbs קרא and בנה actively, or are they meant as reflexive or even passive forms? (3) Does the subject of the third line write 'with' his hand, or 'on' his hand? The first two problems are dependent on each other, because the translation of the verbs is connected with the meaning of the entire verse. Are the gentiles giving themselves new names? Or is Israel coming back and returning to using their old names? Or is it even more complex and is Israel giving itself the old names again? This article aims to discuss the first two problems, especially the arguments given by exegetes to come to a meaningful solution, and the role of textual criticism within the arguments.

I will come to the conclusion that the following is said about the descendants of Jacob/Israel:

*This one will say, 'I am the LORD's,'  
another will call [the others] by the name of Jacob,  
and another will write on his hand, 'The LORD's,'  
and will call [the others] by the honorary name of Israel.*

The third problem will be neglected in this article. Because a translation must be given, I follow the proposal of Korpel and De Moor, who see a parallel in Neo-Babylonian texts. In many cases these texts do not use a preposition either, but an accusative to describe the act of writing the owner's name on the hand of a slave.<sup>1</sup>

## First Problem: Israel or Gentiles?

Since the beginning of Christianity Isa 44:5 is adopted by the Church as a reference to the conversion of Gentiles. This did not need specific argumentation, because many verses of the prophets were considered straightforward prophecies about the time of Jesus and the Church. The situation sketched in the verse, people confessing their faith in the God of Israel and giving new names, was exactly what they saw in their times.<sup>2</sup> The Church Fathers were not interested in what the text meant in the times of Isaiah, but primarily in what it meant for them. Within

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<sup>1</sup> M.C.A. Korpel, J.C. de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40-55*, Leiden etc.: Brill, 1998, 206, note 4.

<sup>2</sup> So e.g. Jerome in his commentary on Isaiah, cf. R. Gryson (ed.), *Commentaires de Jérôme sur le prophète Isaïe*, vol. 3: Livres XII-XV, Freiburg: Herder, 1998, 1350.

that framework Tertullian used it to prescribe the right attitude of martyrs: do not give complicated arguments to your oppressors, but stay as close as possible to the simple confession written in Isa 44:5: 'I am of the Lord'.<sup>3</sup>

This line of interpretation was more or less followed until the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> It was then that the texts were read from the perspective of the author—or the first reader. Ehrlich, König and Torrey published a different opinion on the aim of Isa 44:5: it could only refer to Israel, because the gentiles were not mentioned in the context of this verse.<sup>5</sup> Since then commentators are strongly divided amongst each other, with the result that some do not even want to choose between Israel and the gentiles.<sup>6</sup> In recent times, however, exegetes tend to favour the opinion that 44:5 refers to Israel returning from exile and returning to their God and their old names.<sup>7</sup> The question is which arguments were given for either position. And why are arguments, valid in the beginning of the twentieth century, denied or countered at the end of the same century?

### *Arguments for the gentiles*

We will start with the eldest opinion and mention the arguments given to explain Isa 44:5 as a prophecy about the conversion of the gentiles:<sup>8</sup>

(1) *Ancient Versions*: There is no textcritical evidence for either opinion. Blenkinsopp is the only person referring to the Targum, because it lets Isa 44:5 refer to the God-fearers.<sup>9</sup>

(2) *Semantics*: Several commentators state that the verse by itself cannot refer to Israel, because the words make no sense when applied to God's people.<sup>10</sup> Stuhlmüller gives three arguments: Israel will never give itself the name 'Israel', because it was always called so; the Lord never rejected Israel; and the formula used in verse 5 refers to an adoption of God and name, not to a return to them.<sup>11</sup> Elliger and Beuken state that the verse implies a contrast between the Lord, to whom the believer now belongs, and the other gods. Furthermore, the word כִּנְיָה

<sup>3</sup> Both in *Against Marcion*, book 4, chapter 39; and in *Scorpiace*, chapter 7.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Luther (H.C. Oswald, *Luther's Works*, vol. 17: *Lectures on Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, Saint Louis: Concordia, 1972, 104-105), Calvin (J. Calvijn, *Verklaring van de Bijbel: Jesaja*, Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 2004, 333), Wesley (Wesley's Notes on the Bible, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/notes.ii.xxiv.xlv.ii.html> s.v.), and Delitzsch (F. Delitzsch, *Commentar über das Buch Jesaja* (Biblischer Commentar über das Alte Testament), Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1889, 450).

<sup>5</sup> A.B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel: Textkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches*, vol. 4: *Jesaja, Jeremia*, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908-1914; F.E. König, *Das Buch Jesaja*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1926; C.C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. J.L. Koole, *Jesaja II*, Deel 1: *Jesaja 40 tot en met 48 (COT)*, Kampen: Kok, 1985, 202; J.N. Oswald, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66 (NICOT)*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, 168; B.M. Zapff, *Jesaja 40-55 (NEchtB)*, Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2001, 267.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. D.W. van Winkle, 'Proselytes in Isaiah xl-lv?: A Study of Isaiah xlv 1-5', *VT* 47 (1997), 341-359; B.S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL), Louisville: John Knox, 2001, 342; K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001, 187; M.D. Goulder, *Isaiah as Liturgy* (SOTSMS), Hants & Burlington: Ashgate, 2004, 119, note 18; J. Goldingay & D. Payne, *Isaiah 40-55, Vol. 1 (ICC)*, London & New York: T&T Clark, 2006, 327; U. Berges, *Jesaja 40-48*, Freiburg etc.: Herder, 2008, 323.

<sup>8</sup> The arguments will be given in the order of E. Talstra, *Oude en Nieuwe Lezers: Een inleiding in de methoden van uitleg van het Oude Testament*, (Ontwerpen, 2), Kampen: Kok, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55 (AB 19A)*, New Haven: Yale, 2002, 230 note k.

<sup>10</sup> C. Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah*, Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970, 129 states that about Isa 44:5 'taken just by itself'; E.J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. 2: xl-lxvi, Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1943, talks about 'the natural sense' of the verse.

<sup>11</sup> Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah*, 130-131. The argument of adoption is also mentioned in Beuken, *Jesaja IIA*, 199.

means that an honorary name is given in addition to your own name. Both arguments favour the gentiles.<sup>12</sup>

(3) *Poetry and Parallelism*: Beuken further states that the four lines are all parallel to each other. Therefore, the person adopting the name of Jacob and adding the name of Israel to his own name is from the same group as the person confessing his faith in the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

(4) *Poetry and Meter*: Elliger uses the argument that the meter changes in verse 5 and therefore concludes that it did not belong to the original poem.<sup>14</sup>

(5) *Broader Context of Deutero-Isaiah*: An expected conversion of gentiles fits within the universalistic tendencies of Deutero-Isaiah, according to Bonnard.<sup>15</sup>

(6) *Intertextuality*: Several commentators consider the verse as an allusion to other Old Testament verses. Calvin mentions Psalm 87 in which gentiles see themselves as belonging to Israel.<sup>16</sup> Hanson refers to the creation story, indicating that Deutero-Isaiah expects a new beginning.<sup>17</sup> And Blenkinsopp considers it a new fulfillment of Gen 12:1-3: the gentiles will share in the blessing of Israel.<sup>18</sup>

(7) *Theology*: The traditional meaning of 44:5 was that this verse was visibly fulfilled in the history of the Church.<sup>19</sup>

### *Arguments for Israel*

Less arguments are given for the opinion that 44:5 refers to Israelites. Some arguments stem from authors who favour the gentiles!

(1) *Direct context*: The direct context does not speak of gentiles, is the main argument.<sup>20</sup> Positively stated, the direct context speaks of descendants of Israel.<sup>21</sup> Even opponents of this opinion admit this argument. Elliger therefore supposes that verse 5 is a redactional addition.<sup>22</sup>

(2) *Poetry and Parallelism*: The same argument of parallelism is used in favour of Israel. The names Jacob and Israel are used in this verse not as a political entity, but as a 'confession of faith', according to Baltzer.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>12</sup> K. Elliger, *Deuterjesaja*, vol. 1: Jesaja 40,1–45,7, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1978, 392–393; Beuken, *Jesaja IIA*, 199–200.

<sup>13</sup> Beuken, *Jesaja IIA*, 199.

<sup>14</sup> Elliger, *Deuterjesaja* 1, 394.

<sup>15</sup> P.-E. Bonnard, *Le second Isaïe, son disciple et leurs éditeurs: Isaïe 40–66* (EBib), Paris: Gabalda, 1972, 154. C. Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja. Kapitel 40–66* (ATD, 19), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966, 111 speaks about the 'natural growth' of Israel in verse 4 and the coming of the non-Israelites in verse 5.

<sup>16</sup> Calvin, *Jesaja*, 333; followed by Delitzsch, *Jesaja*, 450.

<sup>17</sup> Apud van Winkle, 'Proselytes in Isaiah xl-lv?', esp. 350.

<sup>18</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, 'Second Isaiah: Prophet of Universalism,' *JSOT* 41 (1988), 83–103, esp. 86.

<sup>19</sup> See the authors in notes 2, 3, and 4. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 187 states that Isaiah only had Israel in mind, but that the verse is 'fulfilled in a measure that was undreamed of' after Pentecost.

<sup>20</sup> A. Schoors, *I am God your saviour: a form-critical study of the main genres in Is. xl-lv*, Leiden: Brill, 1973, 80; P.C. Roodenburg, *Israel, de knecht en de knechten: een onderzoek naar de betekenis en de functie van het nomen in Jesaja 40–66*, Meppel: Krips, 1974, 40; J.D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66* (WBC 25), Waco: Word, 1987, 145; Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 168; Goldingay & Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 1, 327; Berges, *Jesaja 40–48*, 323.

<sup>21</sup> R.F. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40–55*, Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1976, 118.

<sup>22</sup> Elliger, *Deuterjesaja* 1, 394; so also G. Fohrer, *Jesaja 40–66: Deuterjesaja/Tritojesaja* (ZBK 19/3), Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1964, according to the lay-out of his translation.

<sup>23</sup> Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 187. See also van Winkle, 'Proselytes in Isaiah xl-lv?', esp. 347. Goulder, *Isaiah as Liturgy*, 119 agrees with that, stating that 'people will take names that show their loyalty to Yahweh'.

(3) *Broader Context of Deutero-Isaiah*: The message that Israel will return to God and to their former identity as one people fits within the context of Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>24</sup> And the coming of proselytes does not fit within this context.<sup>25</sup> Gentiles are rather portrayed as idol worshippers and not too smart, states StuhlmueLLer.<sup>26</sup>

(4) *History and Intertextuality*: Watts speaks of a 'new enthusiasm among Israelites in Babylon' undoing the 'exilic process of assimilation', which was done by suppressing their distinct identity and hiding behind Babylonian names.<sup>27</sup> One could think of names like Belshazzar, Zerubbabel, Mordekai and Esther.

### *Evaluation of Arguments*

Looking to the argumentation above, one can see that the arguments for the gentiles lay in the field of the larger context, intertextuality and theology. The arguments for Israel tend towards the direct and the larger context. Knowing that more and more commentators favour Israel, we see a shift in argumentation: from larger units and theology toward smaller units and its context. Arguments from theology, valid before the twentieth century, are not widely used anymore. This is understandable if one realizes that exegesis itself is changing from theology and application towards linguistics and the question what the author might have meant.

If we want to explore that path further, we must evaluate the abovementioned arguments and see if we can make sense of the given text within the direct context and within the parameters of its syntax. In that process I suggest to take the text as a unity until it is impossible to hold to that statement any longer. That Isa 44:1-5 is a unity, is no part of the discussion among exegetes. The use of the names Yhwh, Jacob and Israel in verse 1 and in verse 5 is one of the strongest arguments.<sup>28</sup>

(1) *Ancient Versions*: The reference to *Targum Jonathan*, referring to God-fearers, is invalid, because this translation does not refer to proselytes or God-fearing people from the gentiles.<sup>29</sup> The expression דַּחֲלִיא דִּינִי in *Targum Jonathan* is never used for gentiles, turning to the Jewish faith and community, only for faithful Jews (cf. *Tg. Isa.* 33:6; 50:10; *Tg. Mal.* 3:16 bis).<sup>30</sup> In the context of *Tg. Isa.* 33:6 the gentiles are mentioned very negatively in 33:4: 'the house of Israel will gather the possessions of the gentiles, their adversaries'.<sup>31</sup> A tosefta-targum to 2 Kgs 4:1 mentions 'four God-fearers' and names them as Abraham, Joseph, Job, and Obadiah.

If one wants to refer to ancient Jewish books with the opinion that Isa 44:5 is speaking of proselytes or God-fearers, one can choose the *Mekilta*, tractate *Nezikin*, or *Midrash Numbers Rabbah* 8:2. Both has the same explanation of the verse, both explicitly state that four types of proselytes are meant: (1) one in whom is not admixture of sin; (2) the righteous proselyte; (3) the repentant sinner; and (4) the God-fearer.

(2) *Syntax*: It is, on the one hand, said that Isa 44:5 must refer to Israelite descendants. No one, however, refers directly to syntactical rules. On the other hand, some commentators regard the verb כָּנָה as a statement that people take a second name, indicating that Israel was

<sup>24</sup> Torrey, *Second Isaiah*, 344; Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 168.

<sup>25</sup> Elliger, *Deuterojesaja* 1, 392; Koole, *Jesaja II*, 1, 268, who also refers to Fohrer, *Jesaja 40-66*; Beuken, *Jesaja IIA*, 200.

<sup>26</sup> StuhlmueLLer, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah*, 129.

<sup>27</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 144.

<sup>28</sup> See further Korpel, de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40-55*, 230-231.

<sup>29</sup> Although B.D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum* (ArBib 11), Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987, 87 note 44:1-44:8 also supposes so, referring to the same expression in Acts 10:2.35; 13:16.26.

<sup>30</sup> Concerning *Tg. Mal.* 3:16, see also K.J. Cathcart, R.P. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets* (ArBib 14), Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989, 238.

<sup>31</sup> Translation of Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 65.



not their name first. Let us investigate the syntax of the verse in order to come to some solid conclusions:

- Isa 44:5 starts with the word **זֶה**, which is a demonstrative. It is deictic, referring to the immediate situation of the text.<sup>32</sup> The combination of this demonstrative and its repetition as **זֶה** in the next lines makes it refer to a group. It is used in 1 Kgs 22:20 where the combination refers to ‘all the host of heaven’ (22:19) and in Ps 75:7 where it refers to ‘the earth and all its inhabitants’ (75:3). In all cases a group is mentioned and the word **זֶה** singles out the individuals of the group.<sup>33</sup> The group mentioned in the direct context of Isa 44:5 is the seed or the offspring of Jacob/Israel (44:3). Therefore, **זֶה** must refer to individual members of Israel’s offspring.
- The combinations of **קרא בשם** and **כנה בשם** are usually translated with ‘to give/adopt the name...’ and ‘to give/adopt the honorary name...’ If this is true, those favouring the gentiles as their reference point have a strong argument. If these people adopt the name of Jacob/Israel, they most probably were not Israelite by birth. This translation, however, is not very likely. In all the cases that people or things receive a new name, the verb **קרא** is used with the accusative (e.g. Gen 4:17) or with the preposition **ל** (e.g. Gen 1:5). The combination of **קרא** with **בשם** is only used in cases where someone already has a name and is called by that name. If God is the object, we prefer to translate ‘to call upon the name of the Lord’<sup>34</sup>; if a human being is the object, we translate ‘to call by [his] name’<sup>35</sup>. In the Niphal it is best translated with ‘to be called by the name of...’<sup>36</sup> In conclusion, the combinations of **קרא בשם** and **כנה בשם** do not refer to the giving or the adoption of a new name, but rather to the use of a known one. This also leads to assumption that Israelites are mentioned in Isa 44:5.

(3) *Semantics*: All the arguments given under the heading of semantics are either countered above (see 2), or by van Winkle in his article.<sup>37</sup> Especially his remark that one has to discern between the voice of the prophet and the voice of the characters in the text, is very to the point in this regard (p. 346).

(4) *Poetry and Parallelism*: Both sides of the discussion use the argument of parallelism for their sake. Both sides assume that lines 1 and 2 are parallel in meaning, as well as lines 3 and 4.<sup>38</sup> This would end up in an AA'BB' structure. If one of those lines explicitly refers to either gentiles or Jews, all the other lines do that as well. The question is whether this argument is valid, because the verse does not convey an AA'BB' structure, but rather an ABA'B' structure: line 1 is parallel to line 3, line 2 parallel to line 4. This structure is more often found in the text of Deutero-Isaiah, e.g. in 50:8:

*Who will contend with me?  
Let us stand together.  
Who is mine adversary?  
Let him come near to me.*

<sup>32</sup> W. Schneider, *Grammatik des biblischen Hebräisch. Ein Lehrbuch*, Mönchengladbach: Claudius, 2001, 233.

<sup>33</sup> It does not mean that there are only a few individuals singled out, against C.R. North, *The Second Isaiah*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1964, 134.

<sup>34</sup> Gen 4:26; 12:8; 26:25; 1 Kgs 18:24, 25, 26; Isa 12:4; 41:25; 64:6; 65:1.

<sup>35</sup> With explicit object: Ex 31:2; Josh 21:9; 43:1; without object: Isa 45:3, 4; 40:26.

<sup>36</sup> Isa 43:7; 48:1.

<sup>37</sup> van Winkle, ‘Proselytes in Isaiah xl-lv?’

<sup>38</sup> Explicitly stated in Korpel, de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40-55*, 231.

The two questions in lines 1 and 3 stand parallel, the two answers in lines 2 and 4 too.<sup>39</sup> That means that the four lines of Isa 44:5 can have different meanings: lines 1 and 3 talk about people confessing their loyalty to the Lord, lines 2 and 4, however, make a statement about the use of the names Jacob and Israel. Of course, all these lines are connected with each other, but there is no need for synonymy between lines 1 and 2, or between lines 3 and 4. This argument will come back in the second half of this article.

(5) *Poetry and Meter*: Change of meter is a subject that should be explored further. It is occurring so often that it can hardly be an argument for belonging to different sources. Moreover, the meter of verse 5 is exactly the same as the beginning of verse 1, so that one can come to the conclusion that Isa 44:1-5 is indeed a unity.<sup>40</sup>

(6) *Broader Context of Deutero-Isaiah*: Universal claims fit into the theology of Deutero-Isaiah, but the conversion of individual proselytes does not. Even those favouring the gentiles agree that their explanation is not a natural part of Deutero-Isaiah's teaching, and call the verse a later addition.<sup>41</sup>

(7) *Intertextuality*: That Isa 44:5 is an allusion to Gen 1, Gen 12:1-3, or to Ps 87 is proven wrong by van Winkle. There are no outstanding correspondences between these texts and our verse 5.<sup>42</sup>

(8) *History and Intertextuality*: The references to names like Zerubbabel make it at least historically and textually possible that Jews would be associated with the re-use of names like Jacob and Israel.

(9) *Theology*: The fact that a verse is fulfilled in the times of the New Testament or the Church does not say anything about the original meaning of such a verse. No one today will argue that Hosea 11:1 is originally speaking of Jesus and his stay in Egypt. Yet, Matthew states that this verse is fulfilled (2:15). We can at most say that Isa 44:5 found a new meaning in the conversion of gentiles before and after Pentecost.<sup>43</sup>

In conclusion, we must say that Isa 44:5—as it now stands—refers to Jews, descendants of Jacob/Israel, who (again) confess their faith in the Lord and who (again) use the old names Jacob and Israel. They may have been unfaithful in a world full of idols. They may have used Babylonian names, like Esther and Mordekai. They may have been forced to do so, but perhaps some of them were glad to assimilate and be part of a global society. Isaiah, however, foresees the return of these descendants to the God and to the names of old.

## Second Problem: active or passive

Exegetes do not differ greatly on the solution of the second problem. The ancient versions and the Church Fathers considered the verb קרא active, but the verb בנה passive. From Luther and Calvin onward, almost all agree that the verbs of the second and fourth line should be considered reflexive or passive.<sup>44</sup> Delitzsch goes back to the ancient solution and explains the active קרא as a festively calling to the Lord in the name of Jacob: 'feierlich nennen den Namen Jakobs'.<sup>45</sup> Watts considers 'in the name of Jacob' a direct speech of the unknown speaker: 'and this

<sup>39</sup> More examples can be found in Ps 27:1; Isa 49:2; 41:11-12.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Korpel, de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40-55*, 230-231.

<sup>41</sup> See further van Winkle, 'Proselytes in Isaiah xl-lv?', esp. 348.

<sup>42</sup> van Winkle, 'Proselytes in Isaiah xl-lv?', esp. 348-354.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 187.

<sup>44</sup> D. Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, vol. 2: Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations (OBO, 50/2), Fribourg: Éditions universitaires & Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986, 324.

<sup>45</sup> Delitzsch, *Jesaja*, 450.

one calls out “In the name of Jacob.”<sup>46</sup> Some translations seem to be active, but hide a reflexive meaning behind an active modern word, such as ‘adopt the name’.<sup>47</sup> Adopting a name in this context means ‘calling oneself’, truly reflexive. Only a few exegetes from the last decades prefer the active reading of the Masoretic Text.<sup>48</sup>

#### *Arguments for a reflexive or passive reading*

Several arguments are given to divert from the Masoretic Text, either by emendation of it or by translating it differently.

(1) *Textual Criticism*: Symmachus reads κληθήσεται in the place of יִקְרָא, which indicates a passive reading of the Hebrew *Vorlage*. In spite of the thin evidence, some consider this enough to propose an emendation.<sup>49</sup> Some even consider the Septuagint’s translation βοήσεται as a passive form.<sup>50</sup> Watts follows in this case the MT as the most difficult reading, but changes his arguments with regard to line 4. He points at the ancient versions that translates יִכְנֶה passively: Peshitta and Vulgate.<sup>51</sup> Others also refer to the Targum as rendering in a reflexive way.<sup>52</sup> Elliger even wants to emendate the Targum from יִתְקַרֵּב to יִתְקַרָּא, showing a clear, reflexive form of the same verb as MT.<sup>53</sup>

(2) *Grammar*: Many commentators translate both verbs reflexively or passively, some without saying whether they follow the emendations of the BHS or have another reasoning. Only Korpel and De Moor clearly deny the necessity of emending, because they ‘assume that the Qal and Piel forms could acquire a reflexive meaning’.<sup>54</sup>

(3) *Syntax*: Watts seems to consider the lack of objects with both verses an argument to emendate the text.<sup>55</sup> He does so, however, in line 4, not in line 2.

(4) *Poetry and Parallelism*: Many commentators suppose that lines 1 and 2, as well as lines 3 and 4 are to be taken parallel. That means that the person who is confessing his faith in the Lord must be do a synonymous thing to the person using the names of Jacob and Israel.

#### *Arguments for an active reading*

(1) *Textual Criticism*: The MT reads two active forms and there are no manuscripts, not even in Qumran, that deviate from that. The reflexive forms in ancient versions must be considered exegetical translations or harmonizations with the context.<sup>56</sup> Watts gives the argument of the most difficult reading in MT, but only for line 2.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Watts, *Isaiah* 34-66, 137.

<sup>47</sup> So e.g. in the Dutch translations of 1951 (‘de naam Israël aannemen’) and the Revised Statenvertaling (‘de erenaam Israël aannemen’). Childs, *Isaiah*, 338 renders with ‘use the name of Jacob’ and ‘adopt the name of Israel’.

<sup>48</sup> E.g. R.P. Merendino, *Der Erste und der Letzte: Eine Untersuchung von Jes 40-48* (VTSup 31), Leiden: Brill, 1981, 361; Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament*, 2, 325; Berges, *Jesaja 40-48*, 290.

<sup>49</sup> See BHS crit.app., but also Oswalt, *Isaiah* 40-66, 163; Elliger, *Deuterocesaja* 1, 364.

<sup>50</sup> Elliger, *Deuterocesaja* 1, 364; Oswalt, *Isaiah* 40-66, 163.

<sup>51</sup> Watts, *Isaiah* 34-66, 140. See also BHS crit.app.

<sup>52</sup> So BHS crit.app. followed by Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah* 40-55, 230, note k.

<sup>53</sup> Elliger, *Deuterocesaja* 1, 364.

<sup>54</sup> Korpel, de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40-55*, 205, note 3.

<sup>55</sup> Watts, *Isaiah* 34-66, 140.

<sup>56</sup> Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament*, 2, 324.

<sup>57</sup> Watts, *Isaiah* 34-66, 140.



(2) *Syntax*: Torrey points to the fact that a lacking object with the verb קרא is no indication that it should be taken passively. He refers to Isa 43:1 and 45:3—both missing the object—and supposes that it could be done for metrical reasons.<sup>58</sup>

Another syntactical solution is proposed by Vitringa. He supposes that the preposition וְ in the second line is the object of the verb, being impersonal: ‘... and another—people will call [him] by the name of Jacob’.<sup>59</sup>

(3) *Valence*: Delitzsch wants to read the verb קרא as an active verb and explains it on the analogy with ‘calling upon the name of the Lord’.<sup>60</sup> Berges agrees with the active form, but supposes that it refers to the name giving of children.<sup>61</sup>

### *Evaluation of Arguments*

Let us evaluate the arguments concerning the two verbs.

(1) *Textual Criticism*: Watts is indubitably right that MT is the most difficult reading. That is, however, true for both lines 2 and 4.<sup>62</sup>

Oswalt is right in stating that the Targum does not reflect a reflexive or passive reading of the Hebrew *Vorlage*.<sup>63</sup> If we look at the verb יתקרב Itpaal in *Targum Jonathan*, we can see that it is sometimes used as a translation of reflexive or passive voices in MT, e.g. אסף Niphal or נש נש Niphal. However, it is mostly used to render the active voice in MT: nine times for נש Qal and eleven times for קרב Qal.<sup>64</sup> *Tg. Hos.* 7:11 is an interesting parallel to our verse, because the Targum renders the verb יתקרב Itpaal for Hebrew קרא:

Hebrew	Aramaic
מְצִרִים קְרָאוּ אֲשׁוּר הִלְכוּ	לְמִצְרִים אֲתִקְרְבוּ לְאַתּוּר גִּלּוּ
<i>They called to Egypt, they went to Ashur.</i>	<i>They drew near to Egypt, they went in exile to Ashur.</i>

MT shows parallelism, rhythm, and rhyme, which are partly maintained in the Aramaic version.<sup>65</sup> Parallelism is even enhanced by the double addition of the preposition ל and by the use of the verb יתקרב. The verbs ‘call’ and ‘go’ in MT are not parallel with regard to content; the verbs ‘draw near’ and ‘go in exile’ in the Targum are: both suggest a movement, in both cases from a home country towards a foreign one. The shift from ‘call’ to ‘draw near’ is induced by parallelism and by the fact that the Targumists knew that people actually went to Egypt, either for help or to go voluntarily in exile (cf. Jer 42-44). In the same manner it can well be that the Targum also wanted to enhance the parallelism of Isa 44:5—assuming like many modern exegeses that lines 1 and 2 run parallel, as well as lines 3 and 4.

<sup>58</sup> Torrey, *Second Isaiah*, 344.

<sup>59</sup> C. Vitringa, *Commentarius in librum prophetiarum Jesaiae*, 2 vols, Bâle 1732, s.v. *apud* D. Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, 2, 325.

<sup>60</sup> Delitzsch, *Jesaia*, 450; followed by Beuken, *Jesaja IIA*, 200.

<sup>61</sup> Berges, *Jesaja 40-48*, 291.

<sup>62</sup> Of course, not every ‘difficult’ reading is by definition the most original one, cf. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis & Assen: Fortress Press & Royal Van Gorcum, 2nd ed. 2001), 308.

<sup>63</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 163.

<sup>64</sup> Search via A. Houtman, J.C. de Moor, *A Bilingual Concordance to the Targum of the Prophets*, Vol. 21: Introduction, Additions and Corrections, Indices, Leiden: Brill, 2005.

<sup>65</sup> This happens more often, if the translators of the Targum could manage to combine a theologically sound translation with stylistic subtlety, see also E. van Staaldvine-Sulman, ‘Translating with Subtlety: Some Unexpected Translations in TgSam’, *Journal for the Aramaic Bible* 3 (2001), 225-235.

(2) *Grammar*: Korpel and De Moor are right in stating that some Qal forms have obtained a reflexive meaning in some instances. Their examples show it. However, unless it is absolutely necessary to assume a reflexive Qal, I would not choose for this option.

(3) *Syntax*: The lacking object does not necessarily lead to a reflexive meaning. The other Isaian verses prove that.

The solution of Vitranga, regarding the  $\text{וְיִקְרָא}$  in the second line as the object of the verb, is countered by Barthélemy. He deems it improbable that one out of three instances of  $\text{וְיִקְרָא}$  should be read as an object, while the other two are clearly subjects.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, it does not explain line 4.

(4) *Valence*: The suggestion of Delitzsch that line 2 should be interpreted as a festive calling upon the Lord—while using the name of Jacob—is improbable, since it would be unique in the Hebrew Bible and does not fit within the exclusively monotheistic tendency of Deutero-Isaiah.

(5) *Poetry and Parallelism*: As is demonstrated above, Isaiah 44:5 does not have an AA'BB' structure, but rather an ABA'B' structure. Therefore, it is not unlikely to assume that lines 2 and 4 have a different meaning and intention than lines 1 and 3.

In conclusion, we must say that Isa 44:5 refers to Jews, descendants of Jacob/Israel, who confess their faith (again) in the Lord and who use (again) the old names Jacob and Israel. Lines 1 and 3 stress their faith in the God of Israel, which is done orally and by writing—either with the hand or on the hand. This is something people do concerning themselves: one confesses one's own belief and shows it in writing. Lines 2 and 4 in MT, however, seem to talk about calling others by the names of Jacob and Israel. It is not only that Israelites are able and have the courage to confess their faith, but also that they call the others—and their children—freely with the ancient Israelite names. They even regard the name of Israel as a honorary name, no longer as a name that makes them ashamed or that should be forgotten.

## Conclusions

Conclusions concerning the exegetical details in Isa 44:5 are drawn within the article itself. Here it suffices to say that Isa 44:1-5 can be read as a unity. Further results concern the history of exegesis and textual criticism.

(1) It is strange to notice that commentaries hardly give arguments to emendate the text, even when they do it. Some modern commentators do give an argumentation, but the list of arguments in this article had to be composed by citing individual reasons given by single commentators. The most clear and objective arguments—grammar, syntax and valence—are hardly given at all.

(2) The early church considered the verse as a prophecy concerning the events they saw in their times: martyrs' confessions and gentile conversions. This allegorical exegesis is taken over in later times, grounded with new arguments and without acknowledgement that it was allegorical.

(3) Very soon in history the Qal of  $\text{קָרָא}$  was considered giving a reflexive idea. Luther and Calvin began with a double reflexive/passive rendering in lines 2 and 4, which is taken over by almost all modern commentators, even without arguments from textual criticism. It is as if the reflexive meaning came first and became tradition, and arguments from textual criticism were added to it later. This observation is confirmed by the editions of the *Biblia Hebraica*. The edition of 1925, for example, mentions the passive form in Symmachus in line 2, but gives the emendation for line 4 without any references to the ancient versions. The 1949 edition adds the Targum and the Peshitta as arguments for the emendation of line 4.

<sup>66</sup> Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, 2, 325.

(4) It seems difficult to read a poetic text as a meaningful whole. The early church did not read prophecy as coherent speeches of an author, but rather as various statements applicable for the church. The movement of the Renaissance and especially the Enlightenment changed our perspective: we now want to know what the author intended—or at least what the first readers might have understood. This change was not brought about in one time. Old interpretations survived within the new perspective, the old habit of reading prophecy as separate statements made a comeback in the theory that Isa 44:5 would be a redactional addition to the more original text of 44:1-4. This addition would then start with the demonstrative  $\text{הַזֶּה}$ , without any antecedent in the preceding text. As a separate statement, neglecting all syntactical rules, it could be taken as a reference to the gentiles—just as the early church did.

(5) Because the usual poetic verse has a parallel scheme of AA'BB', translators and exegetes tend to think that line 1 has to be more or less synonymous to line 2, and line 3 to line 4. This already caused the four synonymous translation lines in the Targum, and is explicitly said by Calvin and others. It is time to recognize other parallelism structures.

(6) In addition to that, it is time to recognize that ancient versions had the same difficulties with poetic texts as we have, automatically supposing an AA'BB' structure. Textual criticism, therefore, must be aware of this phenomenon and first analyze how an ancient version read the poetic lines. If their translation does not give the same structure as the Hebrew text, perhaps it is better to regard it as an exegetical rendering and not as based on a different *Vorlage*.

(7) It is hard to evaluate the ancient versions. A search with *The Bilingual Concordance to Targum Jonathan* led to the result that the mentioning of the Targum in the critical apparatus of BHS in the row of versions having a reflexive/passive rendering in line 4 is an error. The Itpaal of the verb used in *Tg. Isa.* 44:5 has an active meaning and is often used to render an active Hebrew verb. There is absolutely no necessity to assume a different *Vorlage*. It also brought about that *Targum Jonathan* does not refer to proselytes with the word combination 'God-fearer'. This kind of research should be done for all the other versions as well.

(8) Textcritical rules are used haphazardly. The statement that MT has the most difficult text is made for line 2, never for line 4. It is only mentioned by one author, although the rule *lectio difficilior praeferenda* exists since the London Polyglot.<sup>67</sup> The fact that only one ancient version has a reflexive rendering in line 1 is not regarded as an argument too weak for emendation to many commentators. At the same time, we see that textual criticism changed during the last decades of the twentieth century in so far that it is no longer an emendation programme in search of a better text. It is beginning to grow now into an honest scientific enterprise.

<sup>67</sup> Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 308.